



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

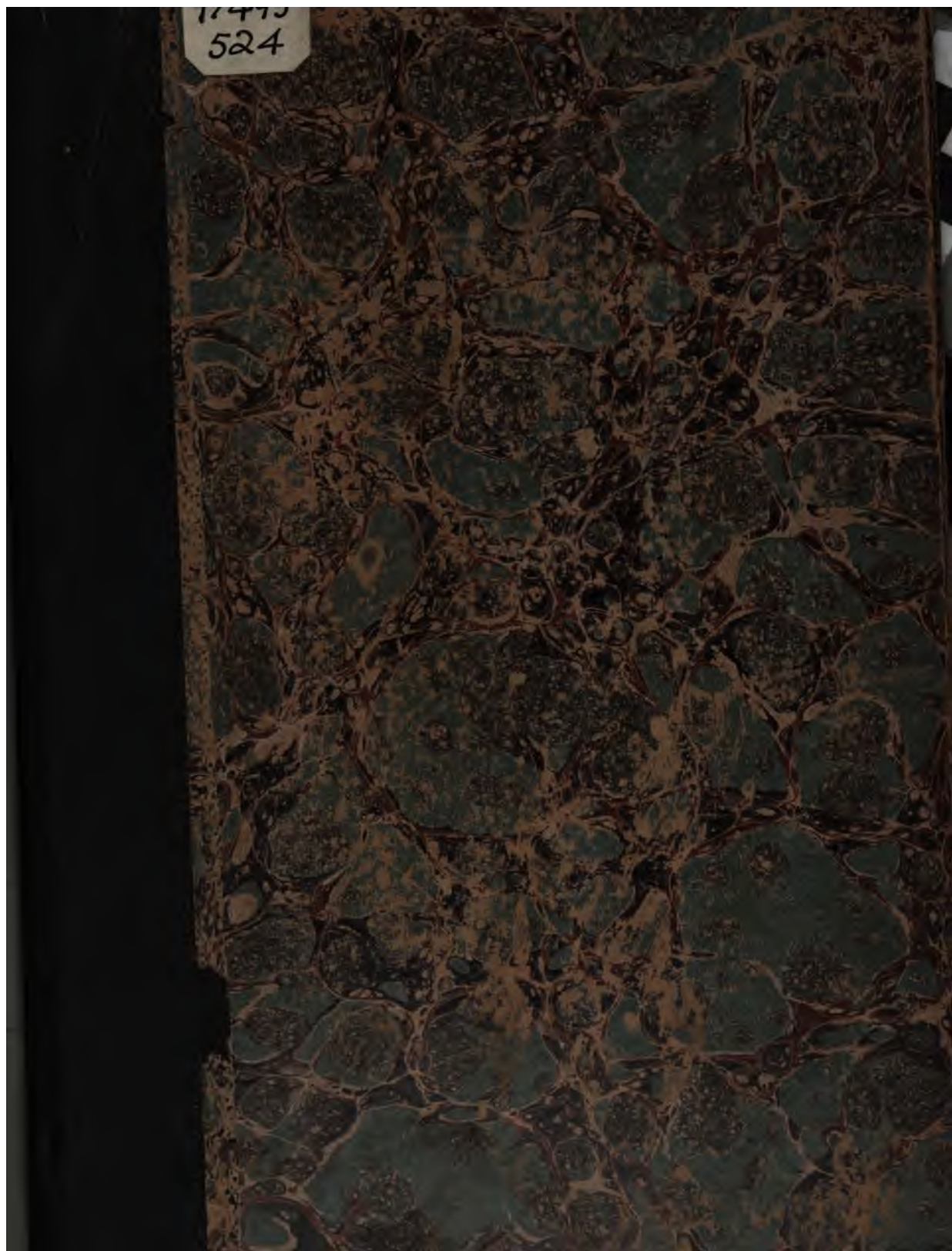
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

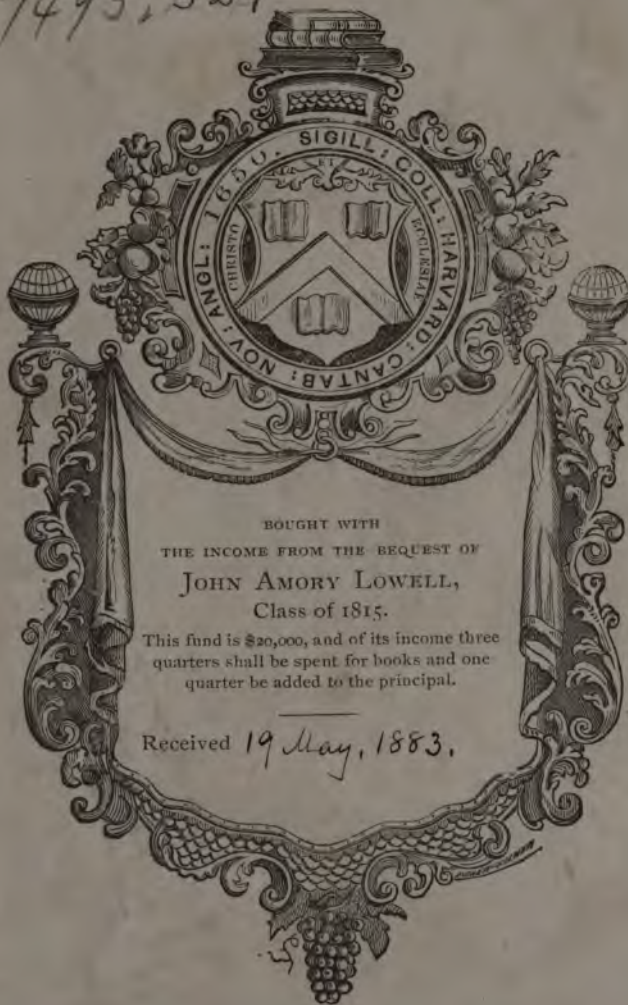
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

17475

524



17495.524



BOUGHT WITH
THE INCOME FROM THE BEQUEST OF
JOHN AMORY LOWELL,
Class of 1815.

This fund is \$20,000, and of its income three
quarters shall be spent for books and one
quarter be added to the principal.

Received *19 May, 1883.*

17495, 44

Cvch
=

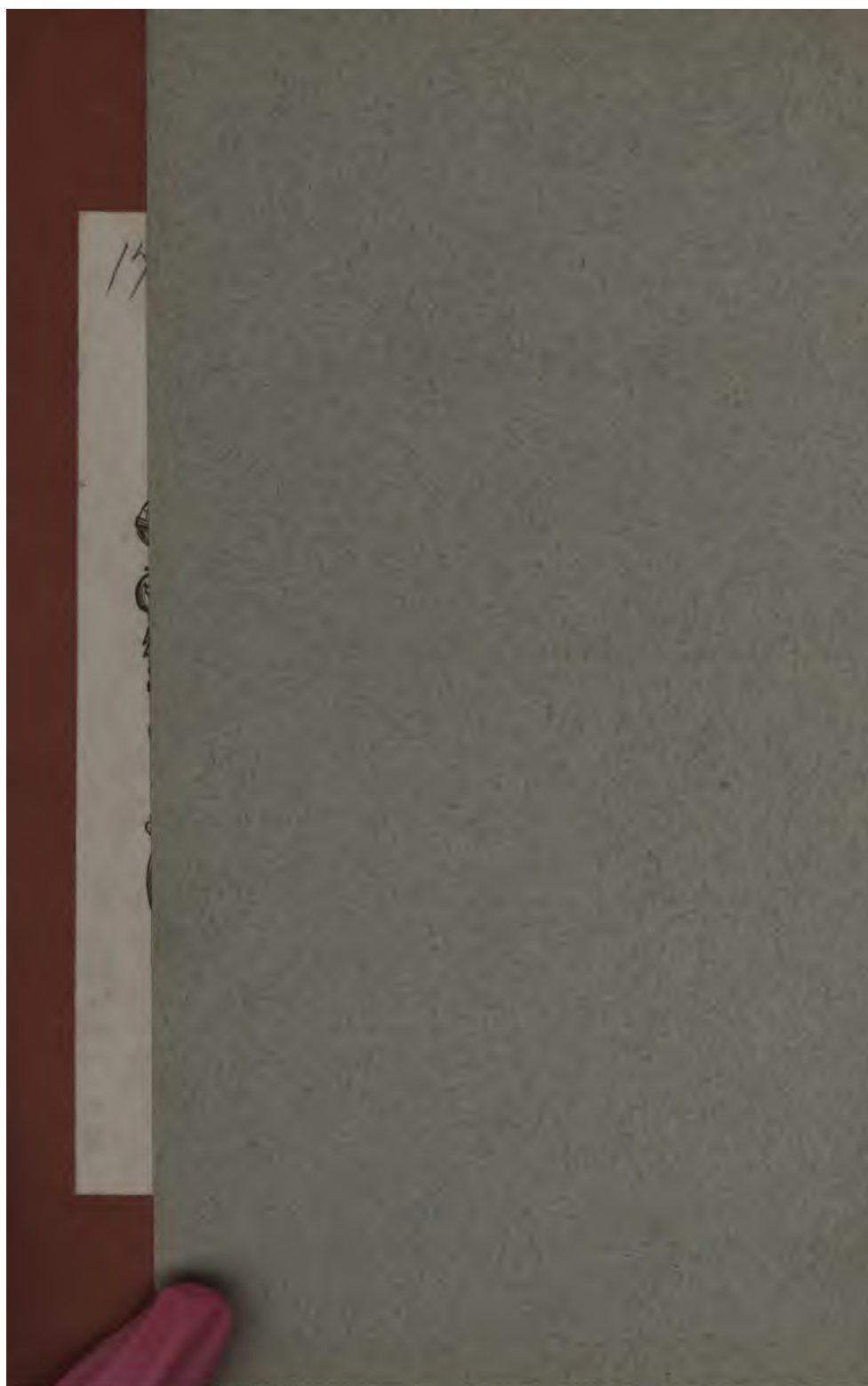
HISTORY
OF
THE BYRON MEMORIAL.

BY
RICHARD EDGCUMBE.

"Tout comprendre, ce serait tout pardonner."

MADAME DE STAËL.

LONDON:
EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.
1883.
Price Sixpence.



©

HISTORY

OF

THE BYRON MEMORIAL.

BY

RICHARD EDGCUMBE.

“Tout comprendre, ce serait tout pardonner.”

MADAME DE STAËL.

© LONDON:

EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

1883.

~~17495.44~~

17495. 524

AY 191883

Lowell fund.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

History of the Byron Memorial.

NEARLY eight years have passed since a fund was inaugurated, having for its object the erection of a statue to the memory of Lord Byron. It may interest subscribers, and the public generally, to know that, after defraying all expenses connected with the memorial, a small surplus remains at the disposal of the committee.

The idea naturally suggests itself to those who take a lenient and liberal view in this matter, that this public gift might well be employed in placing a mural memorial of Lord Byron within the precincts of the Abbey at Westminster. But in order fully to comprehend the nature of objections that have from time to time been raised to like proposals, I will endeavour to review the circumstances under which previous applications were made, and recapitulate the reasons assigned by high authorities for a refusal of them.

Not long after the poet's death, Mr. Hobhouse opened a correspondence with several persons, who consented to subscribe, and to form a committee, for the purpose of raising a statue to the memory of Byron. The result of this appeal was not encouraging, for despite every effort to awaken practical enthusiasm among the poet's quondam admirers, the total amount promised did not exceed one thousand pounds.

With this paltry sum it was found impossible to tempt any of the great British artists. Flaxman had just died; Chantrey, John Gibson, and Sir Richard Westmacott declined the honour, thus leaving the field clear for the more modest Thorwaldsen, who readily undertook the task, and used as a basis for inspiration a bust which he had "taken from the life" some years previously at Rome. The statue was ordered in 1829, and arrived in London five years later. In December, 1834, the committee, which comprised such men as Sir Walter Scott, Isaac D'Israeli, Sir Stratford Canning, Sir Robert Peel (then Prime Minister), Goethe, Samuel Rogers, Thomas Campbell, William Gifford, Mr. John Murray, Sir Martin Shee, and many others, applied through Mr. Murray to Dean Ireland for permission to place the statue in Westminster Abbey. This application, as might have been foreseen, met with a courteous but firm refusal in the form of a letter, which was handed to Sir John Cam Hobhouse as chairman of the sub-committee. There was no alternative but to

wait until a change in the custody of the Abbey offered a chance of a reversal of the decision of the Dean. When, in 1842, Dr. Ireland died, the propriety of making another appeal was discussed at a meeting of the subscribers to the memorial, which, however, resulted in a resolve not to renew the application. There was no chance of success, for the traditions of the Abbey were destined to be preserved by the new Dean, and the feeling—partly social, partly political—against Byron ran inordinately high. The statue, meanwhile, had reposed in the Custom House during the space of eight years like so much worthless lumber. In 1844 the question was again brought forward by Albany de Fonblanque and others, and the proposal to place the discarded statue in the Abbey formed a fertile theme for debate in the House of Lords. It was considered a reflection, not only on our reputation for religious tolerance, but also on our avowed respect for art, that the work of a man of genius, like Thorwaldsen, should be left to crumble away in the London Docks for the want of a fitting place wherein to raise it. Satirical pamphlets flooded the town; and Lord Brougham, in his place in the House of Lords, justly characterised the action of the Dean and Chapter as “one of the most discreditable incidents in the recent history of this country—discreditable alike to our reason, our national taste, and to our good sense.” Such was the opinion publicly expressed by a man who had been thrown into personal hostility with Lord Byron, owing to the publication, in 1808, of his merciless criticism on the second edition of the ‘Hours of Idleness.’ Sir Walter Scott, in a letter to Mr. Hobhouse, dated December 1826, hoped “that the guardians of that asylum (Westminster Abbey) would not fix their attention on speculative error and levities, but consider the quantity of genius of which Britain was prematurely deprived, and the real character of the individual, though it was not always that which was most ostensible.”

Such were the sentiments of the blameless author of a hundred volumes, in regard to placing Lord Byron’s monument in Poet’s Corner. But these words, generous though they were, had been anticipated by a more generous tribute to Byron’s memory, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* shortly after the news of Byron’s death reached England. In that beautiful sketch, which is now embodied in Scott’s collected works, the poet-novelist says:

“Greece and the world have been deprived of this remarkable man; and surely, to have fallen in a crusade for freedom and humanity, as in olden times it would have been an atonement for the blackest crimes, may in the present be allowed to expiate greater follies than ever exaggerated calumny has propagated against Byron.”*

* ‘Prose Writings of Sir Walter Scott,’ vol. ii. p. 343. Ed. 1834.

But Bishop Blomfield was not to be cajoled. He rose, and replied to Lord Brougham in the following words :

"I must be permitted to hope that the Dean and Chapter will never allow such a monument to appear in the Abbey. In common justice to the Dean and Chapter, I feel myself bound to express my approbation of their conduct. The Dean and Chapter have nearer and higher interests to attend to than the national taste—interests connected with the national religion. If Lord Byron in his works attacked the Founder of our religion, and, by the beauties of his poetry, was one of the most dangerous advisers of youth, his statue does not deserve a place in the Temple of our God." *

But the question which the Bishop of London thus raised is precisely that which posterity will be bound to disclaim. Did Lord Byron attack the Founder of our religion? I maintain that Lord Byron never, either in writing, or by any authenticated expression in conversation or otherwise, attacked the person or the teaching of Christ. He had doubts as to the divinity of Christ certainly; but they were no more than doubts, and never approached to any decided denial of belief in Revelation. He had nothing in common, as he tells us, with the speculative opinions of Shelley, for whom he nevertheless entertained high and just esteem. When the latter linked his name with the word "atheist" in the visitor's book at Montanvers, Byron, in the presence of Mr. Hobhouse, blotted out the senseless word. In the great poem with which Byron's name will descend to the remotest posterity, there is no scoffing or unseemly raillery. On the contrary, a pure hope of immortality pervades the theological portions of the work, and dashes to the ground the senseless accusations which his detractors have thought fit—in a far from Christian spirit—to hurl at the poet. But so persistent has been this attack upon the morality of his views, that we remember to have read, in a comparatively recent number of 'Fraser's Magazine,' harsh condemnations of a modest endeavour to raise a statue to Byron in Hamilton Gardens. It was urged by the writer that Byron abhorred religion, virtue, and mankind. Now, it would have been easy enough to rebut this statement; but a consciousness of the force of public justice, and belief in the good sense of the average reader, counselled silence. Attacks upon the dead are beyond refutation. The dead mutely appeal to the justice of the living, and vindication is always certain to attend them. I would advise anonymous detractors to follow the example of the objective and mock-modest Persians in the case of Hafiz. Let them open at random the works of our maligned poet, and perhaps they will find something to match the beautiful lines in 'Childe Harold':

* *Times*, June 15, 1844.

" Yet if, as holiest men have deemed, there be
 A land of souls beyond the sable shore,
 To shame the doctrine of the Sadducee
 And sophists, madly vain of dubious lore—
 How sweet it were in concert to adore
 With those who made our mortal labours light;
 To hear each voice we fear'd to hear no more;
 Behold each mighty shade reveal'd to sight;
 The Bactrian—Samian sage, and all who taught the right!"

But the writings of a man are not to be judged by particular passages, or by picking out their faults or their beauties. We must take a general view of their effects, by setting off the good against the bad, and by considering the general intention and result. If in Byron's works the evil parts overbalance the good, so much the worse for the value of his genius. But do they outweigh the good? It is not evil to detect and expose hypocrisy; it is not evil to pierce the disguise of meretricious love; and the picture which renders it *ridiculous* will avail more than a thousand sermons. Sir Egerton Brydges reminds us that in all our attempts to improve human nature, we ought always to have regard to its frailties, its dispositions, and the tendency of its passions. All excessive puritanism leads to hypocrisy, and breeds more mischief than it cures. Now it cannot be denied that the practice of the world is to uphold decorum and outward appearances, and *there* rest content. Byron's deadly sin lay in his having pierced the veil, and shown things in their true light—for this he was accused of having attacked virtue, and was ostracised. A few able men spoke in his favour, and among them Lord Jeffrey. In a remarkably severe criticism on Lord Byron's dramas, which appeared in the 'Edinburgh Review,'* Jeffrey wrote:

" We have already said, and we deliberately repeat, that we have no notion that Lord Byron had any mischievous intention in these publications, and readily acquit him of any wish to corrupt the morals, or impair the happiness of his readers." The truth is, that the finer parts of Byron's poems encompass so much spiritual splendour, and, though passionate, are so pure, that they redeem, even if they fail to eclipse, many positive faults. Who will deny that if certain portions of 'Cain' had been written by Milton, or any other poet whose piety is not doubted, they would have been regarded as little short of holy inspiration? But Byron bore the reputation of a scoffer; consequently a false view was taken of every line which trenched upon accepted theories in regard to revealed religion.

It may be urged that Byron had no claim to write on sacred

* February 1822.

subjects. But public opinion in these days will scarcely ratify such an assertion. Every intelligent man has a right to express—provided that he does so in perfect good faith—his individual opinion on matters affecting his future state. The dark days of blind subservience to the will of a more or less brutal priesthood have passed away for ever, and the public voice, clamouring for a full investigation of facts and probabilities, has fixed a limit to the tyranny of the Inquisition. Now the question I desire to propound relates, not so much to Byron's claim for a monument in the Abbey, as to the general principle affecting the custom of honouring the mighty dead. A glance at the names in Poet's Corner would satisfy any unprejudiced person that the religious test has not been always applied. Let us take, for instance, the names of Dryden, Spenser, Ben Jonson, Drayton, Butler, Milton, and Gray, Mason; Shadwell, Prior, Phillips, St. Evremond and—*horresco referens*—Christopher Anstey! At least half of these are authors of works which no wise father would put into the hands of his son; and yet, of this number only Milton was refused the coveted honour. For more than half a century his name, like Byron's, was excluded. So far, indeed, was this intolerance carried, that when the inscription for the monument of Phillips, in which he was said to be "*solus Miltono secundus*," was shown to Dr. Sprat, Dean of Westminster, he refused to admit it, the name of Milton being, in his opinion, too detestable to figure on the walls of a building dedicated to God. At Sprat's death the Abbey fell into the hands of Dean Atterbury, who, being the author of the inscription we have quoted, graciously permitted its reception. We here perceive that the judgment of Dr. Sprat, not only in regard to the obnoxious inscription, but also in regard to Milton himself, has been reversed. Is it therefore in vain to hope that the persecuted Byron may at some distant date be accorded a like honour? The objections raised against Milton did not, so far as we know, extend to the others we have named. It appears that Prior's '*Hans Carvel*' and '*Paulo Purganti*,' the obscenities of the "*dramatists*," the scoffings and raileries of *Hudibras*, the dirty *doubles entendres* which sully the '*New Bath Guide*' of Anstey, found favour among the authorities who denied to Byron's name a place among the poets. We need but glance at the names upon the Abbey walls to perceive that the honour had not hitherto been awarded on the score of piety or morality, or even on a general good tendency, but on the fame and recognised genius of the writer. Take for instance St. Evremond. None can question his claim, as a State pensioner and Governor of Duck Island, to national honours; nay, we are pleased to think that his name covers a certain mural space which might have been devoted to worse purposes. But

we fail to comprehend why a denounced atheist—a man whose last thoughts were devoted to the kitchen, and who informed his confessor that he wished rather to be reconciled to his stomach than to his God, should receive honours denied to English poets of far loftier genius. Clearly the religious test is of modern growth. We will not deny that the difficulties which environ a Dean of Westminster—however liberally inclined—are somewhat akin to the perplexity of a nineteenth-century judge, when, contrary to his own instincts, he finds himself confronted by precedents established in a previous century. That which one Dean has decided to be unworthy of reception, another Dean cannot consistently receive, and in order to set this clearly before the reader we will quote from a letter, written by Dean Stanley in February 1875, in reply to a personal application, from the present writer, for permission to erect a tablet to Byron's memory :

"In regard to our conversation respecting the tablet to Lord Byron, I think it best, under the circumstances, that I should not serve on the committee. There is no special reason for selecting my name from amongst the many eminent men amongst the clergy, except for the office which I hold, and this, as I explained to you, is rather a disqualification than otherwise. Without entering on the question whether my predecessor acted well * or ill in refusing to allow of the funeral or the monument of Lord Byron in the Abbey, and without prejudging the question as to the proper course to pursue, should the matter be again brought forward for consideration, I should exceedingly regret that any such proposal with regard to Westminster Abbey should be mooted during my connection with the place. I am therefore unwilling that my name should so appear as to give encouragement to any re-opening of the former decision, or as to anticipate any judgment on the question, were it re-opened. You will understand, of course, this implies on my part no want of appreciation of the honour, which I should have felt it to be, to have my name associated with those of the distinguished persons whom you mentioned as willing to serve on the committee, for a purpose in itself so obviously commendable."

That the Dean should, by the nature of his position, have been constrained to take this course is obvious, but in order to show his real opinion in regard to the action of Dean Ireland, I propose hereafter to give another letter, written in reply to a further application made by the present writer for permission to employ a portion of the Byron memorial fund in the erection of the said tablet. In a preceding page I gave a slight sketch of the proceedings taken by Mr. Hobhouse's committee in 1829, and showed how bitter was the animosity of Byron's opponents. For twenty-one years a priceless work of art lay neglected in the Customs' warehouse. Efforts were

* The Dean's views are more clearly defined in a subsequent letter.

made by Byron's friends, and others, in order to reverse the public sentence, but all to no purpose. In 1855, when it became known that the Abbey was finally closed against one of the greatest poets of the age, several applications were made for the erection of the monument in some other public building. While the question of a site was still in abeyance, the master of Trinity College, Cambridge, showed that he was not afraid of contaminating his pupils by giving a conspicuous place to the statue within the noble library of the College. And there it stands, a mute protest against intolerance, a glory in itself, an excellent likeness of the man, and a nation's pledge for further distinction whenever the condition of public opinion permits it.

The success achieved by Mr. Hobhouse was but relative. There are many who deem statues superfluous, and who cite the inscription on Wren's tablet at St. Paul's as an example worthy of imitation. Others regard statues as semblances of the dead, not vainly reared for the augmentation of fame, but as a perpetual evidence of contemporary appreciation of genius, of valour, or of worth. The statue of Columbus at Genoa, of Cavour at Milan, of Napoleon at Ajaccio, of Nelson and Wellington in London, were not raised to enhance the glory of those heroes, but as a proof that each country is alive to their several claims to general—I had almost said universal—recognition.

When, in 1875, the present writer found that Byron's resting-place was inadequately marked, and indeed almost lost, within the chancel at Hucknall Torkard, he followed the example of Mr. Hobhouse, and addressed those persons who, by reason of their literary and social distinctions, and well-known sympathy for Byron, were most likely to assist in erecting in some public place a monument of that great poet. In order not to startle a somewhat sensitive public, it was resolved, as a preliminary step, to place a small slab, inscribed with Byron's name, over the exact spot where he lies buried. Permission was readily accorded by the lay vicar of Hucknall, the late Duke of Portland. Mr. Disraeli, Alfred Tennyson, Bishop Trollope, Lords Lovelace and Houghton, Mr. G. A. Sala, Wilkie Collins, the Rev. B. H. Drury and others, readily consented to further this project; and on the fifty-first anniversary of Byron's death a subscription list was opened in the *Times*. But Mr. Disraeli, then Prime Minister, whose admiration for Byron was both sincere and enduring, expressed himself by no means satisfied with the modest proposals of the committee. With that indomitable "pluck" for which he was famous, he lent the weight of his great name and high official position to secure for the author of 'Childe Harold' a really national memorial. A public meeting was held in Willis's Rooms on the 16th of July, 1875,

on which occasion Mr. Disraeli delivered a brilliant panegyric in support of Byron's claim to national distinction.

"How is it," he asked, "that after half a century has elapsed, we are met here for the first time in public meeting to devise some means of a national expression of admiration and gratitude to qualities so transcendent? It has been said, with some reason, for this strange and dark neglect, that the private character of this poet was not as illustrious as his public one. When half a century has elapsed, private character is scarcely an element in the estimate of literary genius."

Those who were present on that occasion will not readily forget the impression which the speaker made upon his audience. Compact and intolerant hostility began to hide its head. From that moment the reviled poet's cause became a subject of interest in other lands besides our own. The European press commented favourably on the speech. Committees were formed in France, Italy, and in Greece, while at the same time America was swift to show her appreciation of the genius of "the pilgrim of eternity." Men like Longfellow, Cullen Bryant, and Winthrop, formed themselves into a committee for the purpose of co-operating in a simple act of justice. Lord Stanhope the historian,* Mr. Murray, the son of Byron's true and consistent friend, Lords Rosslyn, Malmesbury, Bradford, and Barrington, Sir Robert Peel, Algernon Swinburne, Alfred Austin, Frederick Locker, and others, joined the committee, and gave their best efforts to secure the success of the undertaking. It was understood from the Dean's letter, already quoted, that an application to place a monument in the Abbey would not have been an act of grace. It was therefore necessary to seek out some public site whereon to base whatever statue might result from an international competition of artists from every country in Europe. But the result was not satisfactory. Infinite pains had been taken by the artists, and considerable expense had been incurred by the committee, to little purpose. Two public competitions took place. The first, which was held at the South Kensington Museum in November 1876, proved abortive, there being no special merit in any of the "sketch models" submitted for competition. A second competition took place in the summer of 1877, at the Royal Albert Hall, with but little better result, and the committee felt bound to select the best among the submitted models in order to check the expenses which these futile competitions involved. We have no wish to expatiate on the merits or demerits of the selected design which has since culminated in a colossal statue, and has formed a conspicuous element in a recent trial. It may be said to be neither better nor worse than most of our metropolitan effigies; but that is the

* And, subsequently, Lord Derby.

utmost we can say in its favour. As a monument to the genius of a great poet it is wholly inadequate; as a work of art it is *mesquin*; and as an example of Mr. Belt's capacity, it is wholly misleading.*

As a matter of fact, these competitions are futile. If one could divest the artist's mind from a suspicion that favouritism will somehow or other operate in the ultimate selection of a design (no easy matter), there would still remain the feeling that his work will be judged by persons having preconceived notions as to the form which the memorial should assume. Under these circumstances a competitor feels the greatest possible restraint in carrying out his own conception, fearful (and not without cause) that the best work will be set aside by incompetent judges in favour of a design more in harmony with their crude notions of appropriateness. 'This was plainly evident in Mr. Belt's design. Although he did not enter the November competition, he took the wise precaution to attend the public view, and there saw a model which the committee had commended. From that moment Mr. Belt's imagination became enslaved, and he forthwith laboured to produce something likely to please the committee, utterly regardless of his own conceptions and the requirements of the public. I take it that Mr. Belt's calculations were well founded, and, while bitterly deploring the result, I cannot deny him the merit of having exactly hit off the tastes and artistic capacity of a majority on the committee.

It may not, perhaps, be as generally known as it should be, that artists are averse to competing, even anonymously, fearful lest by failure they would lay themselves open to a suspicion of incompetence.

These persons, who are generally deservedly famous, mostly stand aside and let the younger hands fight it out. I think it might be shown that the results of these public competitions are no criterion as to merit, and if proof were needed I could, within my own experience, name (in strict confidence of course,) at least five first-class sculptors who failed to win even the doubtful glory of the Byron competition. Meanwhile, it would be both ridiculous and unjust to suppose that these men could not have executed better designs if they had been left to themselves and their own inspirations. But the feeling that a certain class of people would be their judges; that the design would have to be executed in a given time (a fatal bar to free conception no

* The most interesting feature in this monument is the fine *rosso antico* marble, from the Morea, contributed by the Greeks in recognition of Byron's claims to the grateful remembrance of that nation. No less than fifty-seven tons were quarried, and delivered in London, at the expense of the Greek Exchequer.

less in works of art than in the poetic faculty), and many other considerations, played them false.

As a result, Mr. Belt was destined to win the suffrage of a majority, not only without flattery to his own capacity, but also without succeeding in worthily commemorating the genius of Byron.

If these competitions are to continue, it would be well to remember that under their auspices the nation loses the best work at its command, and as a result no one is satisfied. It would be far better, under these circumstances, to leave the designs in the first instance wholly to the judgment of disinterested artists, and then appoint a mixed committee (which might be designated "a committee of taste") to suggest what alterations would be most appropriate. If an artist shows sufficient capacity for selection, that is all that can be expected or desired of him. Mutations, even to the extent of an entire remodelling of the design, should be tolerated, and no one having failed by competition should be permitted to object to any subsequent form which the selected design may be required to assume. As matters now stand, no considerable deviation from the original design would be allowed, and the long-suffering public is doomed to see diminutive designs, which may look well enough in a room, appear for all time incongruous and grotesque in colossal proportions.

It may surprise our children's children to learn that the greatest difficulty was experienced in procuring a suitable site. The Green Park and the top of St. James's Street were denied to the committee. Holles Street was inconvenient; and the Thames Embankment, considering the prosaic nature of its surroundings, is somewhat remote from one's conceptions of the poet's Valhalla. At length her Majesty, with characteristic liberality, handed over to the committee an imposing site in Hamilton Gardens opposite to the statue of Achilles. There is something not altogether incongruous in the chance proximity of these statues—Byron and Achilles! Both were handsome, brave and affectionate. Both were formidable foes, and somewhat revengeful, but open-hearted withal, and easily susceptible to the softer influence of women. Both fell in Greece before they could taste the sweets of victory. And here the semblance ends. The body of Achilles received at least the honours of a god, while that of Byron—though honoured by the Greeks—was spurned by his countrymen, and privately deposited within the chancel of an obscure Nottinghamshire hamlet. By the erection of his statue in Hyde Park some of the stigma under which the poet laboured during life has been removed, and a step in the direction of the Abbey has been taken. The rest must be left to Time. Milton's fifty years of dark neglect yielded him more honours than we seek for Byron. Now that half a century has passed since that tragic

death in Western Greece, which the Greeks have recently commemorated at Missolonghi, perhaps the same reaction which favoured the author of 'Paradise Lost' may be re-awakened by the whispers of our national conscience, on behalf of the author of whom an impartial critic once said :* "Whatever objections may be made to 'Cain,' none can be made which will take from Lord Byron the title to fill an important place in our national poetry."

At a time when a vigorous opposition was made against the proposal to erect the late Prince Napoleon's statue in Henry VII.'s Chapel, I called upon the high-souled Stanley to substantiate his reputation for liberality, by admitting within the Abbey a simple tablet inscribed with Byron's name.

It was suggested to the Dean that his impartiality in proposing temporally to set aside the traditions of the Abbey could not be better exemplified than by performing an act of justice towards the memory of a celebrated English poet, against whom unreasoning prejudice had warred so long. This suggestion drew from Dr. Stanley the following remarks, which give a clue to the Dean's views in regard to the action of his predecessor, and strengthen the hope that the reception of Byron's name is merely a question of time. On February 26, 1881, he wrote :

"I thank you much for your truly kind and considerate letter. I am still of the same mind about the re-interment † of Byron's remains, or the erection of a monument—viz. : that, whilst, had I been Dean at the time, I would certainly have admitted both, I think the decision of Dean Ireland is too recent to be reversed with propriety unless by a strong statement of competent persons to the contrary. I say this, rather than 'a large portion of the people,' because an agitation, such as a general canvass for signatures would involve, among illiterate persons, would be undesirable in the process, and unsatisfactory in the result. I have enough on my hands at present with the Prince, ‡ and I do not desire to plunge into another sepulchral or monumental controversy at such a time. You will not, I am sure, misunderstand me when I say that I should immediately be charged with an endeavour to reconcile the world to the admission of the monument of the poor Prince by making a compact with the Devil.

"Strange to add—last week for the first time I visited Hucknal Torkard with the deepest interest; and harshly, frightfully incongruous as is the place and its surroundings with Byron's fame, yet there is something so characteristic in this incongruousness that I should hesitate—and I think the world would hesitate—to disturb it."

It is evident from this letter that the late Dean regarded the proposal to place a tablet in the Abbey merely as a *ruse* in order ulti-

* 'Letters on the Character and Poetical Genius of Lord Byron.' Egerton Brydges. Page 89.

† The translation of Byron's remains had not been suggested.

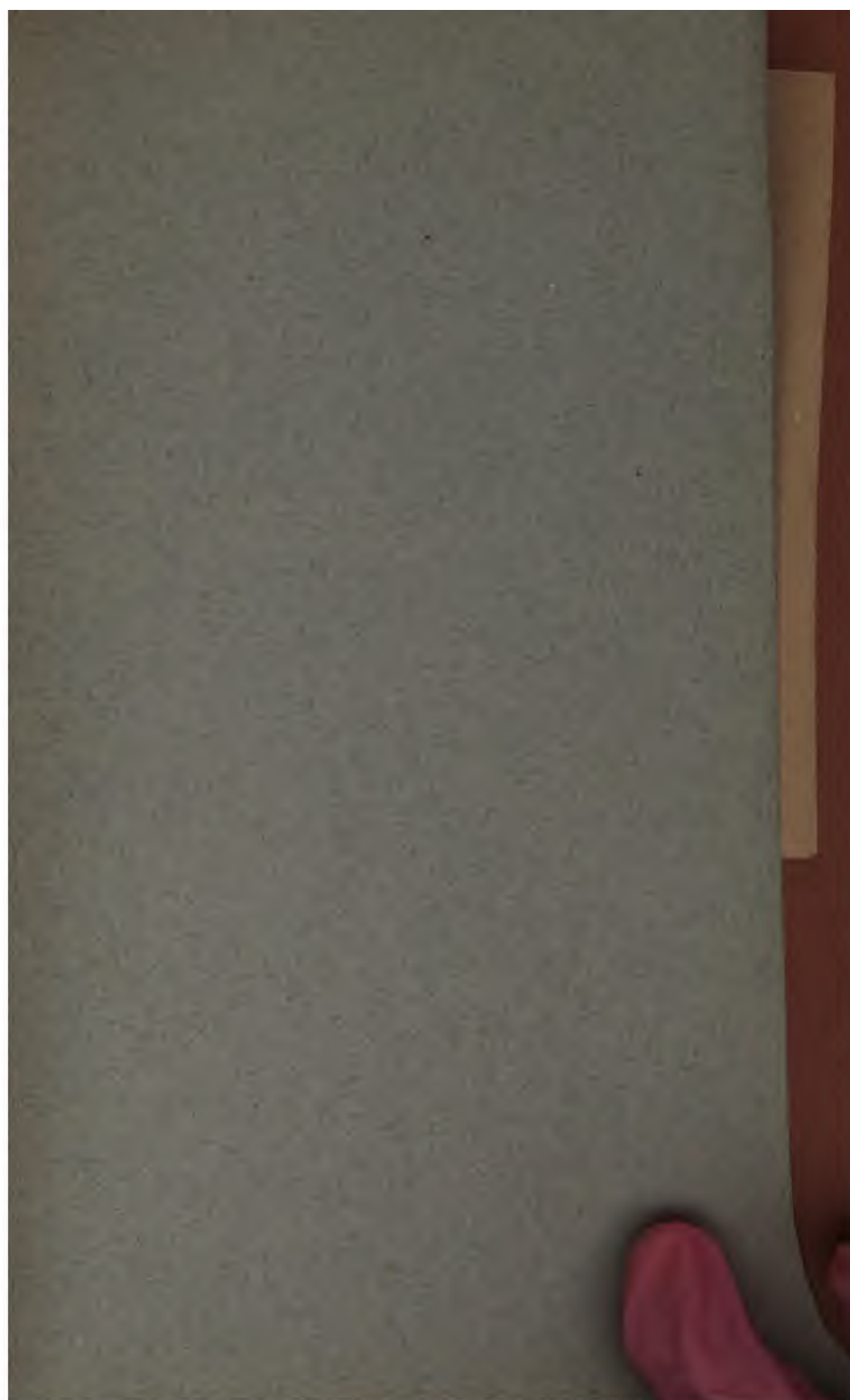
‡ Prince Napoleon Bonaparte.

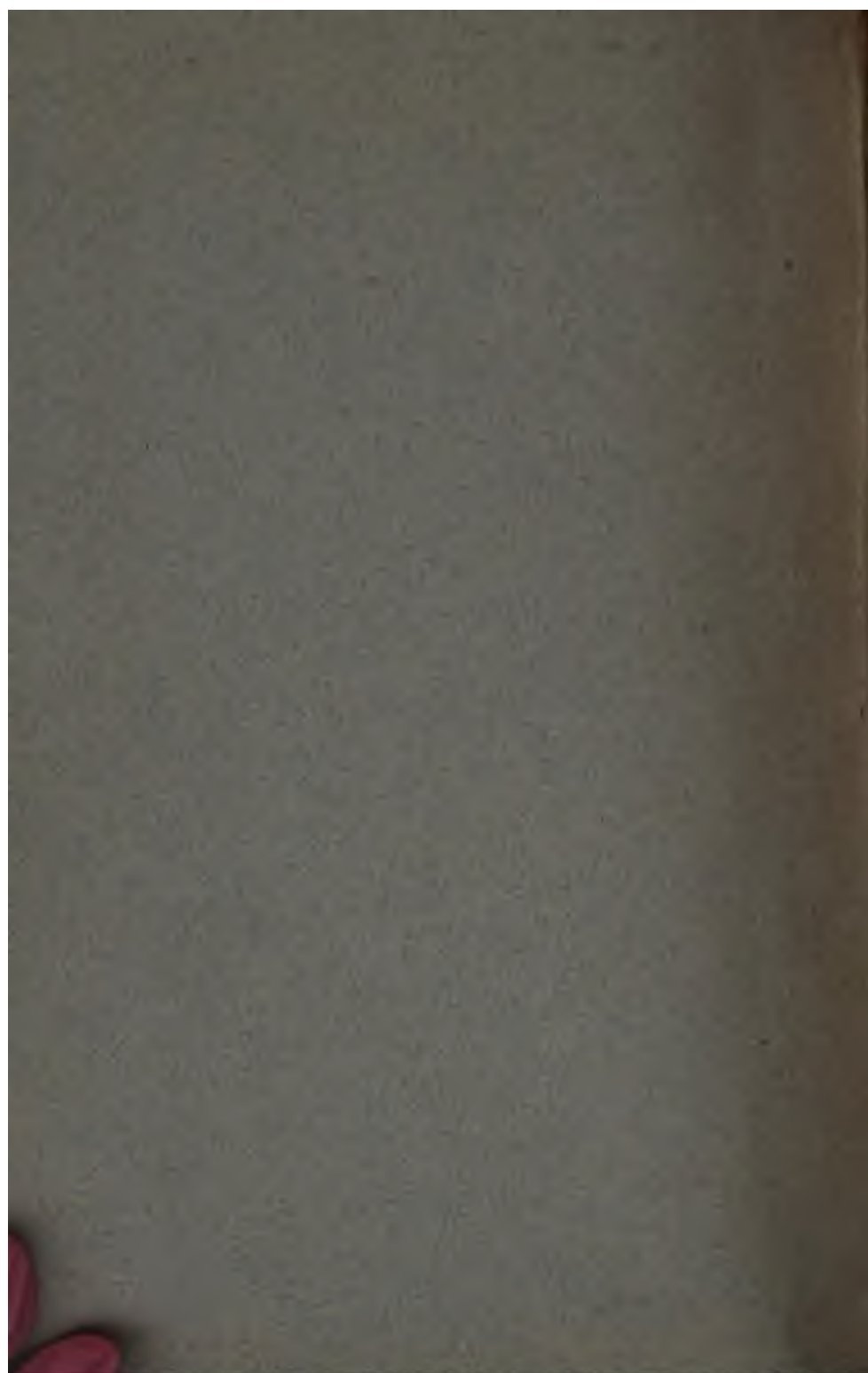
mately to insure the translation of Byron's remains. It would be well therefore, once and for ever to disclaim the impeachment. We have no desire to tamper with the dead. Let Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Pope, Burns, Keats, Gray, and Goldsmith, sleep their eternal sleep in remote churchyards. There is a strong Gallic savour in the act of translating the remains of heroes of the hour, and we deprecate the custom. We merely desire to record our admiration for the genius of Byron in the simple orthodox manner. We wish to satisfy the expectations of foreigners who visit the Abbey, and search in vain for some memento of that English poet whom all other civilized nations delight to honour.

Death has since stilled the blameless life of another Dean of Westminster. The wise and liberal-minded Stanley has passed from the arena of strife into the peaceful existence which knows no end. Among the many evidences that he gave of a truly Christian toleration, not the least noteworthy is the assertion that had he been Dean of Westminster at the time of Byron's death, he would have welcomed both his body and his monument. It may be hoped that this assertion will strengthen the hands of his successor, and enable him to make an equally generous response to the next application that may be made in behalf of a modest mural tribute, dedicated to the memory of the author of 'Childe Harold.' It was with a feeling of satisfaction that the British public recently heard of Dean Bradley's action in regard to Longfellow. It was felt, and rightly so, that, as poets belong to no country, the great American deserved the highest distinction which it is in our power to confer on the mighty dead. Strange though it may seem, there would be nothing incongruous in a proposal, on the part of America, some day to return the compliment. But the apathy that we have shown towards the memory of some of our greatest poets gives rise to the impression that the people of England are incapable of appreciating the genius of those who—however deserving in other respects—may have failed in attaining to a high standard of religious excellence. The words employed by Cicero on behalf of Milo would appear to be peculiarly apposite to the case of Byron: "Will any person give his voice for banishing a man from this city, whom every city on earth would be proud to receive within its walls? Happy the country that shall receive him! ungrateful this, if it shall banish him!"

6

ma-
 the-
 no-
 Po-
 in-
 tra-
 cu-
 of-
 ex-
 fo-
 na-
 m-
 of-
 m-
 le-
 m-
 hi-
 wa-
 an-
 m-
 th-
 th-
 re-
 be-
 dia-
 St-
 a-
 me-
 son-
 of-
 ho-
 a-
 Ci-
 th-
 a-
 to-
 hi-





1
MAY 2 1911

~~ALL 174 1324~~

17495.524
History of the Byron memorial.
Widener Library 002986566



3 2044 086 786 282